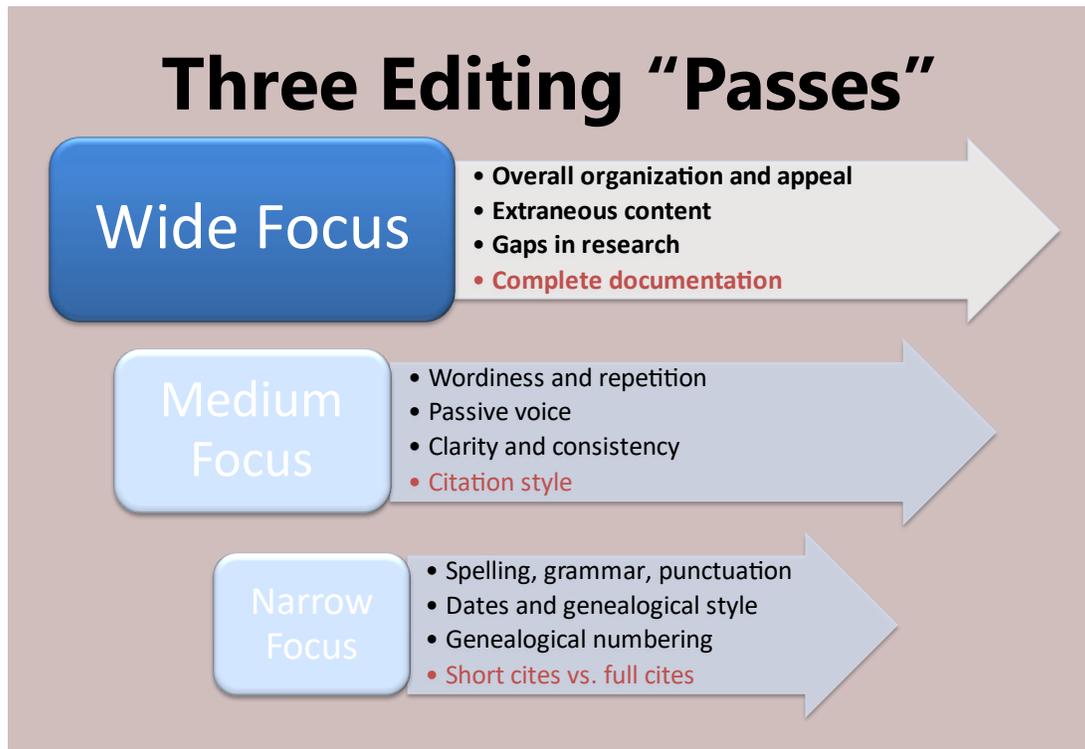


Writing and Publishing Your Family History

Class 5: Editing Passes

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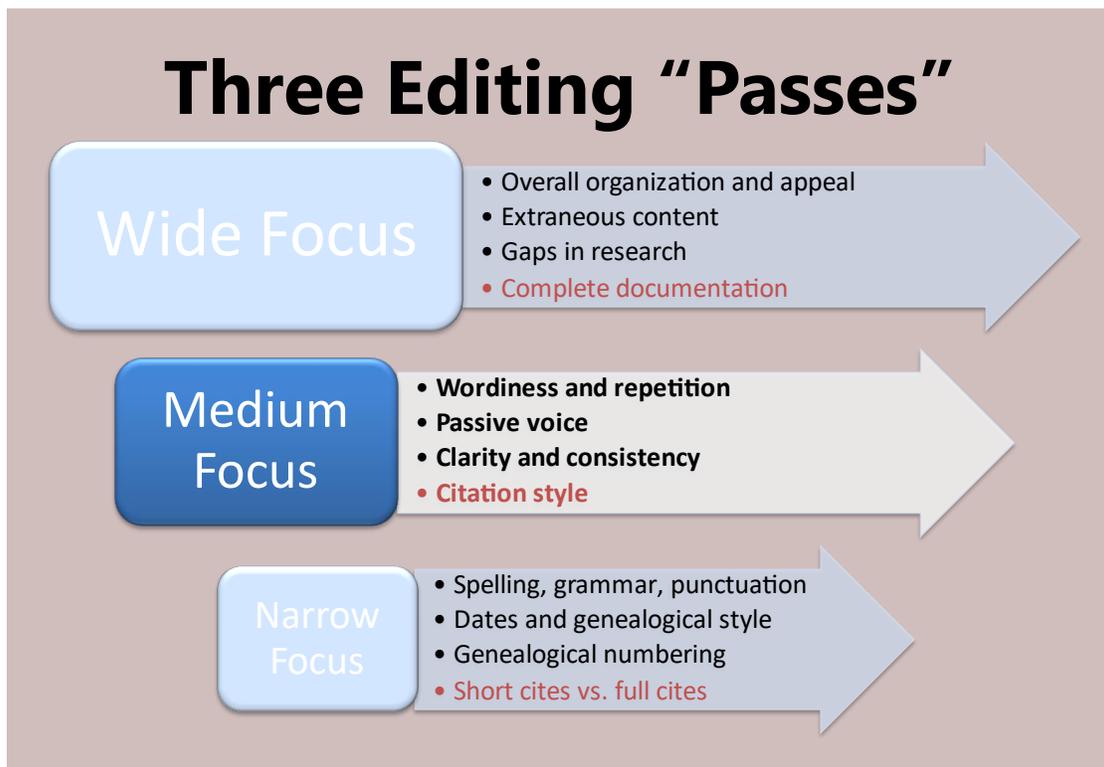


A good way to tackle the self-editing process is to do it in three separate passes. No one, even a professional editor, can check all of the levels of content contained in a genealogical publication in one read. You can try, but you’ll probably reach a point where you feel your brain is going to **explode**.

In the first wide-angle read, look at how your work is organized. If you made a good table of contents, you should be all set. Try to take a step back and read your work as if it were written by someone else. This should be a “fun” type read that feels kind of “light” - not a lot of stopping and starting and back-tracking. Try to keep moving while fixing obvious errors. Ask yourself: Is your writing appropriate and interesting for your audience? Does the narrative flow smoothly? Are the paragraphs in the right order?

This read will also pick up on repetition of facts and any content that seems out of place or not related to the story at all. (These parts could be pulled out and put into an appendix.) Have you included all the necessary research or do you need to follow up on a few pieces? (Add notes to yourself in the Word file if you do.) Have you followed the golden rule of citing as you write, providing a source for every fact that needs one?

Three Editing “Passes”

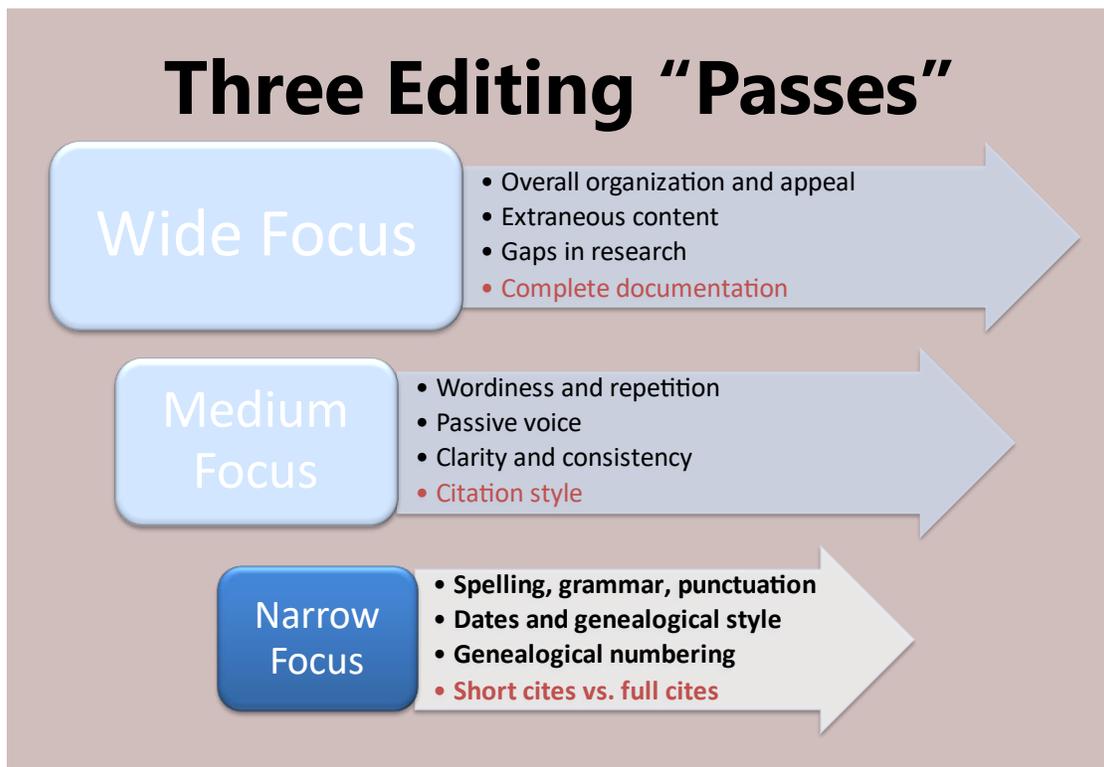


Now do another pass and zoom in a little bit more. This second pass will be a “heavier” read that will involve some scrolling up and down in the file or flipping back and forth through the pages you printed.

Pay attention to things such as too many adjectives or the use of the same phrase over and over. Watch for passive verbs where an active one will make your writing more engaging. Make sure your statements are as clear as they can be, especially on confusing points about family relations or chains of events.

Check your text against your stylesheet. If you’ve been using it, you should be in good shape on the consistency front. Remember that consistency leads to clarity and clarity leads to good comprehension.

Three Editing “Passes”



Finally, now that you’ve done some editing at the wide and medium levels, go through again and look at the details within specific sentences and words. Is this or that word spelled correctly? Does the subject agree with the verb in this sentence? Is the punctuation correct? Are dates always given in the same format? Don’t forget to check dates to be sure they make sense. We don’t want any women having babies at age 8 or after they’re dead!

Note that I’ve put the items in each pass that are related to footnotes in red. I recommend that you do your three reads on the main text, then go through a fourth time reading **only** the footnotes. Footnote content is its own “animal” and uses a different part of your brain from narrative content. It’s easy to miss something and make mistakes in the footnotes **and** in the narrative when you’re going back and forth from one to the other.